

The Status Report

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Legislative Session Ends July 31 - Your Help is Needed NOW!



With only a few weeks left in the Massachusetts Legislature's formal session the MCSW is working diligently to move its legislative priorities forward. Below is a listing of the Commission's key bills and an update on the bills' status. Things are changing very quickly so if you would like to participate in advocacy efforts contact Outreach Coordinator Jill Ashton at 617-626-6525 or jill.ashton@state.ma.us. If you are interested in receiving any additional information about these bills please contact Ashton at jill.ashton@state.ma.us.

S2386 (previously S1858)/H2826, An Act to Authorize the HRD to undertake a Study of the State's Job Classification System. This bill would encourage pay equity for state employees by requiring the state's human resources division to establish a job analysis study

of state employees of the executive branch to update the current job classification system and review class titles, job specifications, organizational relationships and job qualifications to insure that employee compensation, pensions, and benefits are free from gender and racial bias. The senate version on this bill has been engrossed by the Senate and now currently resides in House Rules along with the House version of the bill.

S1172, An Act Establishing the Bristol County Commission on Women. This bill would create a permanent commission on the status of women in Bristol County consisting of 9 people, appointed by the MCSW. The Bristol Commission will be charged with conducting an ongoing study of all matters concerning women in Bristol County and advising local and state officials on their findings and recommended solutions. At printing the bill is in its third reading on the House floor.

SD2727, An Act Establishing the Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women. This bill would also establish a permanent commission on the status of women. The Commission would consist of 13 persons living in Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket Counties. The Cape Cod and Islands Commission will be charged with conducting an ongoing study of all matters concerning women in Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket Counties and advising local and state officials on their findings and recommended solutions. The bill was late filed in April and is currently waiting to be assigned a bill number and sent to a committee.

S1073, An Act Establishing Paid Sick Days. This bill would ensure that workers in Massachusetts have the opportunity to earn a minimum of seven days of paid time off annually to take care of their own health needs and those of family members. The bill is currently in Senate Ethics and Rules.

H4718 (previously H1151), An Act Relative to Caregiver Medical and Educational Consent This bill would allow parents to authorize a caregiver, such as a grandparent or kinship care provider, to consent to medical treatment and educational decisions on behalf of the child that is in their care. The Act would not divest the parent or parents of any guardianship rights, but would give caregivers concurrent authority with the parent or parents. The legislation was engrossed by the House and is currently before the Senate Ethics and Rules Committee.

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Proud Member of the



Executive Director's Corner

"It's just the right thing to do."

Those were the words of Lilly Ledbetter, talking about her decision to pursue her pay equity case against Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. all the way to the Supreme Court and beyond.

Ms. Ledbetter, the plaintiff in the much-heralded 2007 Supreme Court case that resulted in the pending federal Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, was the keynote speaker at the June 9 *Women, Wages & Work Policy Conference* at UMASS Boston. She made a profound impact on the nearly 250 people gathered at the Conference with her unassuming manner, courage and perseverance to do whatever it takes to ensure that what happened to her does not happen to other women. "It's not about the money. What happened to me is just not right. My goal is to help young women today not make the mistakes I did.

"Our policies should reflect a nation that values women. We need to pass legislation to be sure that people can challenge discriminatory paychecks as long as they continue to get them," Ledbetter said.

Ledbetter worked as a manager for nearly 20 years at a Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company facility in Alabama. She was almost 60 years old and on the verge of retiring when an anonymous letter turned up out of the blue and revealed she was being paid 15%-25% less than her male colleagues and was the lowest-paid supervisor out of a group of 16 supervisors at the facility, despite having more experience than several of her male counterparts.

Ledbetter took her employer to court where a jury agreed she was paid unfairly, and awarded Ledbetter \$223,776 in back pay, and over **\$3 million in punitive damages**. A judge cut that to only \$300,000 because of a 1991 law that limits a company's liability for damages. Goodyear took the case to the Supreme Court, which ruled 5-4 against Ledbetter, taking away every cent of the damages and back pay. In a decision written by Justice Samuel Alito, the Court told Ledbetter that she should have filed a complaint of pay discrimination within 180 days of her first unfair paycheck, even though she had no knowledge of the disparity.

Ledbetter may never recover the pay she rightly earned, but federal legislation has been introduced in her name in an effort to restore the true intention of Title VII of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, and protect other women from wage discrimination.

She continues her fight on Capitol Hill and all across the country, travelling now two weeks out of every month, more often than not at her own expense. She and her family have been plagued with health issues and operations, but she refuses to let anything slow her down for long. The retirement money she was entitled to, not to mention the previous court awards, would come in handy now as she drives the hour or more to the airport and parks her car to fly out to continue the fight for women's wage equity.

But it's not about the money. For her, it is just the right thing to do. The MCSW applauds this phenomenal woman. It was truly an honor and a privilege to meet and spend time in her company. Go Lilly!



...continued from page 1.

S622, An Act Relative to Equitable Coverage for Annuity Policies. This legislation requires that state regulated annuity policies sold to residents of Massachusetts must be gender-neutral in all the terms and conditions of the contracts, including premiums and benefits. Currently, annuities sold to women do not provide the same value as those sold to men. A woman either pays a larger premium in order to secure an equitable monthly payment or paying the same premium as a man receives a smaller monthly payment. The bill has been engrossed by the Senate and is currently in House Ways and Means.

H617, An Act Establishing the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission. This legislation would establish a commission of experts to assess the challenges and unique needs associated with grandparents raising grandchildren and kinship care providers raising their related children. The Commission would serve as a liaison between grandparents and kinship care providers and organizations and agencies to foster relationships and ensure that caregivers have access to the services and assistance they need to raise and care for their children in their care. The Commission would also evaluate the effectiveness of state agencies in assisting grandparents and kinship care providers and advise the state as to how to best assist these unique families. The bill language has been included in S2472 which was engrossed by the Senate; along with a House version of the bill, the legislation is currently in conference committee.

Commissioner Corner: Spotlight on Commissioner Ruth Bramson



Appointed to the MCSW in 2006 by former Governor Mitt Romney, Commissioner Ruth Bramson was recently named the CEO of the newly created Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts. As CEO Bramson is building an organization that will create the leaders of tomorrow. Commissioner Bramson is well known for her work as Executive Vice President of Human Resources for National Grid US, the second largest utilities in the US and a subsidiary of National Grid UK. Prior to joining National Grid, Commissioner Bramson has served as Chief Human Resources Officer, Chief Diversity Officer, and Undersecretary of Administration and Finance for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the Romney administration.

In a career spanning 25 years, Ruth has held executive positions with several major corporations including Shaw's Supermarkets/Star Markets where she served as Senior Vice President, Human Resources and Chief Diversity Officer, Reebok International, and Charles River Laboratories, a division of Bausch & Lomb. She also spent several years consulting to major New England companies on talent management, culture and change, mergers and acquisitions strategy, and communications.

Ruth holds a Master's degree from Boston University and an undergraduate degree from Barnard College, Columbia University. She also completed Harvard University's Executive Leadership Program for Women. Ruth is an international lecturer and published author on many management issues, including strategic change, workplace violence and sexual harassment prevention, and organizational development.

Commissioner Bramson founded and, for six years, chaired Suited for Success, a non-profit organization, which supports women as they transition from welfare to work. Ruth also serves on the Board of Employers against Domestic Violence, and the Board of Governors of the Tufts-New England Medical Center. She is also a Commissioner of the Massachusetts Service Alliance, which oversees all state funding of volunteer organizations. She is an Advisory Board member of Junior Achievement and a Trustee of Middlesex Community College. Ruth is also a longtime member of The Boston Club.

Commission Welcomes Summer Interns

Each semester, the MCSW welcomes a new crop of interns to help supplement the work of its staff. This summer we are pleased to be working with the following college students:

Meghan Condry, is a humanities student at Providence College. She is supporting the work of both the MCSW's Outreach and Legislative Committees. Much of her time will be focused on building a foundation of research to support the committees' work in the coming year.

Erta Kokalari, a native Albanian, is double majoring in History and Government at Bunker Hill Community College. Her work will include further development of the Massachusetts Women's Resource and Referral Network and coordinating a public relations plan to promote this online resource.

Mary Powell, a Political Science major at the University of Dartmouth, will be serving as a Communications Intern. Working with staff, she will contribute to the monthly Status Report, the MCSW's website, and other external communications. In addition, Mary will be updating the *How to Get Appointed to State Boards and Commissions Directory*.

The MCSW is currently seeking interns for the Fall Semester. The opportunities available can be found at www.mass.gov/women/internopps.htm. For more information regarding the MCSW's internship program please contact Outreach Coordinator Jill Ashton at jill.ashton@state.ma.us.

Women and Education Focus of MCSW Public Hearing on June 24th

On June 24th the MCSW, in collaboration with the American Council on Education Office of Women in Higher Education and the Massachusetts Network of Women in Higher Education, held a public hearing to assess the issues facing women trying to obtain an education as well as to evaluate programs available to correct these issues.

Linda Turner, President of Urban College of Boston delivered an informative presentation regarding a program the UC of Boston coordinates which offers courses at a discounted rate to make education more affordable for both men and women. The Vice President of Academic Affairs at Roxbury Community College, Brenda Mercomes, reported that the student's first semester experience and accessibility to Pell Grants are both important factors in student success. Mercomes also noted that 70% of the students at RCC are female. Jill Griffin, Director of Community Partnerships at the MA College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, presented information on the MCPHS Creando Futuros program which has given 250 Boston Public School students the opportunity to explore possible career opportunities in the health and pharmaceutical fields.



*Linda Turner, President of
Urban College of Boston*

Sylvia Ferrell-Jones, CCO of the YWCA of Boston noted the many programs the YWCA has available to help educate young women on the importance of academic success. Erika Kates of the Wellesley Center for Women and Cheryl Braxton of Bay Path College also testified with regards to trends and programs at their respective organizations.

Nicole Vilcina and Louis Callwood delivered emotional testimony regarding Ms. Vilcina's experiences seeking nontraditional employment through a college program. Ms. Vilcina described discriminatory actions taken by her instructor as she was to climb 40-foot utility poles without a harness, including providing her with the incorrect sized boots and gloves.

In keeping with its mandate to study and report on the status of women in Massachusetts, the MCSW holds statewide public hearings to hear the concerns of women and those organizations that advocate for them. The Commission utilizes public hearing testimony to shape and influence its work. If there is an issue in your area that you think the MCSW should know more about, please contact us at mcsw@state.ma.us and we will make every effort to hold a hearing in your region in the new fiscal year.

June 9th Women, Wages and Work Conference Educates & Engages Hundreds

On June 9th 250 women gathered on the UMASS-Boston campus to learn more about the ever-present gender wage gap. Attendees experienced keynote addresses by such wage equity ambassadors as The Wage Project's Evelyn Murphy and former Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. employee and wage equity legislative pioneer Lilly Ledbetter.

Former Lt. Governor Evelyn Murphy passionately put the issue into perspective by putting a lifetime monetary value on the effect of the gap. "Over the course of her lifetime a woman with a high school diploma will earn \$700,000 less than the man sitting next to her on graduation day. She will earn \$1,000,000 less than her male counterpart earning the same college degree, and she will earn \$2,000,000 less than the man earning the same graduate degree she does," Murphy stated.

Lilly Ledbetter delivered a humble keynote address recapping her experiences leading up the historic Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. Following the keynote speeches, there were panel discussions regarding legislation that could impact the wage gap in a positive manner as well as making the workplace for you.

Attendees spent the afternoon in breakout sessions focusing on topics such as closing the wage gap, preparing for retirement, advocating for yourself in the workplace for higher pay and promotions, paid family and medical leave, job/skills training and more.

Those in attendance left the conference with more knowledge of how the wage gap effects them financially as well as with the tools to work towards closing that gap in our lifetimes.

Take Action. Get Educated. Get Involved.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in the movement to advance women in the Commonwealth you can start by attending any one of the number of events and meetings taking place across the state in the coming weeks.



Wednesday, July 16 - Saturday, July 19: NACW Annual Convention

Location: Hotel Albuquerque (Albuquerque, NM)

Details: The members of the National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) will gather to attend the 39th Annual Convention and Business Meeting a productive and fulfilling convention full of workshops that will build skills for working with women's commissions and their annual business meeting. This year's theme, "Girls of Today – Women of Tomorrow," is hosted by the New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women.

Sunday, July 27 - Wednesday, July 30: AGELE 2008 National Conference

Location: Boston Marriott Peabody (8 Centennial Drive, Peabody)

Details: The Association for Gender Equity Leadership in Education Conference theme is "Building Leadership for Diversity In Education: Examining the Gender Intersect." The program includes three excellent pre-conference sessions, a workshop for Title IX Coordinators, a workshop on Single Sex Education, and a workshop on investigating complaints and reports of harassment, along with plenty of fascinating concurrent sessions. The conference participants will hear from two excellent keynote speakers. Dr. Randy Abelda from the University of Massachusetts-Boston will address her research on economic policies affecting low income families in her presentation "Is College the Ticket to Women's Equity?" Dr. Lucian Yates III from Texas A & M Prairie View will address his research on African American males in his presentation "Examining the Gender and Race Connection Through Research on African American Males." For more information please visit www.agele.org/conf2008.



Wednesday, August 6 (8:00 p.m.): Girls Night The Musical

Location: Hanover Theatre (2 Southbridge Street, Worcester)

Details: Get your girlfriends together for a non-stop laugh out loud, feel good musical comedy to benefit the YWCA of Central Massachusetts! Enjoy a girls night out at the new Hanover Theatre for a must-see performance of *Girls Night: The Musical*. Let loose as the women perform classic "get on your feet and sing out loud" songs like "I'm Every Woman", "Lady Marmalade", "We Are Family" and more! Tickets are \$52, with \$10.00 of every ticket sold will be donated to the YWCA Central Massachusetts' domestic violence programs - Daybreak & Battered Women's Resources - Serving Central and Northern Worcester County. For more information, contact Gina

MacConnell at 508-767-2505, ext. 3009 or e-mail events@ywcaworcester.org. To purchase tickets, visit www.thehanovertheatre.org or call 877-571-SHOW.



Thursday, December 11 (7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.): Massachusetts Conference for Women

Location: Boston Convention and Exhibition Center

Details: The Massachusetts Conference for Women, hosted in conjunction with the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, is a non-profit, non-partisan, one-day event where Massachusetts women can connect, learn practical and professional strategies from nationally recognized experts, and network with peers. Now in its fourth year, this upcoming Conference promises to be more exciting, more educational and

more inspiring than ever with dynamic speakers and panelists who are eager to share their experiences and opinions with participants of all ages, from all across the state. The Conference will honor inspiring women with our Be the Change Award, and attendees will hear firsthand how the Conference is making a difference in people's lives. Nominate a woman for the Be the Change Award and register for the Conference by visiting www.maconferenceforwomen.org.

Do you have an event you would like to see on this list in an upcoming issue of The Status Report? E-mail the details to Program Coordinator Kim Sebastiao at Kimberly.Sebastiao@state.ma.us and we will do our best to include your event in our next issue.

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